

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SALESIAN FAMILY



DON BOSCO TODAY

THE SALESIAN BULLETIN • YEAR 115 • ISSUE 2 • SUMMER 2007



HE'S MY BROTHER

Building Relationships

As a seventeen-year-old High School student, relationships (whether pre-existing or just starting out) play a big role in your school years. In my experience, building relationships was never an extremely hard task; I was always very personable with my elders and had a way of relating to my peers.

I have built up many strong relationships, but the relationship that is definitely strongest is due to the years and years of work put into it. My best friend Billy and I have been friends since kindergarten. Billy and I have gone through many scarring events. No matter what the problem, we always stayed close throughout and helped each other through everything. Billy and I were a little too mature for our age, we never hung out with our age group; for as long as I can remember our friends were older – which brought us deeper into problems as well as deeper into maturity and knowledge.

When Billy and I were younger, I saw our relationship as just best friends, nothing more, nothing less – as people who spent a lot of time together and could confide in one another. As we grew up we went our separate ways, which in most cases would break people apart. We however grew closer, which was the point when I realised our

relationship was important. Billy had a very strange life, although in the beginning growing up he lived in a normal household in a normal town. Billy's father was a cop for some twenty odd years, and was married to Billy's mother Helen – who had already been married once before and had one child. Billy had three older siblings, his two older brothers (one from the prior marriage), and his sister. Normal children with normal parents in a normal town. What I didn't know was that his father was charged with 24 counts of child abuse, this was start of Billy's problems and our struggle to remain the closest of friends.

Billy's father was sentenced to near-life imprisonment in Trenton State Penitentiary; his mother lost his father's pension and became a severe alcoholic, and lost her job. The family began moving from town to town because of their reputation. The only time we talked were the couple times a week I got on the bus to go see him, or the scarce times that he scrounged up the 35 cents to pick up the pay phone and give me a call.

Our relationship was now significantly harder to maintain, but I knew he needed me around more than ever. His sister, at the age of 16, had become a full-blown cocaine addict as well as a mother to a



gang lord's baby girl. His older brother started off with the marijuana and drinking, and then moved up to cocaine and crack – which landed him a combination of a 5 to 7 year sentence that he is currently serving; and to go along with all that, his oldest brother was parenting a 6 year old girl that he had had at the age of 18. I was told many times to forget him, because he wasn't good for me, but he was my best friend and I was not about to disown him because of his family.

The one person to whom I entrusted a lot of my information about us was my old middle-school teacher, who told me millions of times that Billy was in need of a good friend, and I was just that. She defended my attempts to support our friendship no matter how hard it got. I really did believe that for some reason I was put in Billy's path to set his life straight, even when I couldn't help change his bad decisions. I knew I was there to help him cope with the consequences. This is what I now set my standards on as a true friend. And our relationship never really fell short of those standards, as we were always going out of our way for one another no matter how severe or how little the task. Billy and I stayed together through blood, sweat and tears mainly because somehow I knew it was God's plan, and I think he saw it that way, too. I learned a lot about faith over the years in our relationship together and I learned a lot about life especially being around all the losses.

Billy and I grew up together surrounded with a lot of drug use, trafficking and gang associations due to our circumstances. We befriended many of these people despite their baggage, but we lost a lot of them along the way – one of the reasons why together we started to rethink life, and how short it really was.

One of our friends who we spent a good portion of our teenage years with, either partying or hanging out, had gotten into a big drug trafficking ring. We told him he was in over his head. As much as we told him to get out of the game, and if he wouldn't, then to stop what he was doing on the side, because one day his protection would fail – and it did; He was shot multiple times in the chest, and once in the head. A 19-year-old kid making wrong decisions was disposed off. Billy and I realised it

could have been us. We focussed more on each other to find ways of making each other better. I had questioned my faith, as a child. Faith was extraneous, something that just didn't do anything for me – my religious life was non-existent. But, after all the hardships I had been through, faith became more apparent. This was very sad to me that only in times of need is where faith was really appreciated or relied upon. Well although it may be sad, it did bring me to my faith and I'm happy because of it.

My faith grew. From being an atheist, I am now a believer – someone who entrusted his life into the hands of a higher being because I needed help. Billy's friendship showed me that I needed help, for the things my friends couldn't control. I needed that help and it dawned on me to pray and seek help and advice – and through prayer, I can honestly say I came to peace with a lot of my mistakes, and gained knowledge from them as well.

Building relationships, in particular this one, was the best thing for me as a person. No matter how badly it brought me down at times the trouble I got in, it always seemed to make its way back up. No matter what I went through I never regretted the path I chose because I learned and got so much out of it. And I will continue to learn as I build my relationships.

Friendships are something I hold really close to my heart, mainly due to Billy's and mine. I know now through his friendship what it is to be real, what it is to genuinely care about someone and go through anything for a friend. To be able to be a better person because of it and carry it through the rest of my life. I'm proud of it, regardless of how many bad things happened along the way. I got a lot out of my experiences and no matter the hardships that went along with it there were never any regrets.

Don't ever give up on your gut feeling. Your friends are your friends for a reason; regardless of the mishaps, they are still your friends, and I believe in keeping relationships strong. Don't ever give up on those who you've befriended, no matter what people say to you – don't let them go; it's your privilege to keep your friends from their downward spirals.

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

It was a rainy morning in December and as I stood outside the school chapel under my umbrella greeting the young people arriving for school a few of them came across seeking sanctuary from the elements under my brolly. The conversation was sparkling, the weather failed to dampen the young people's spirits and as we stood together chatting about pixies, fairies and invisible hot air balloons, all fifteen of us getting terribly wet, I was aware that life here in the midst of these young people made absolute perfect sense.

For a long time I have been inspired by that famous story of Don Bosco's first mass at the newly opened Sacred Heart Basilica in Rome where he explained his tears were because life, as it drew towards its close, finally made sense. Maybe I can hope that one day I might share in this level of understanding but until then I have to content myself with snatched moments of comprehension like the one above. These times of understanding can be few and far between – I suspect everyone who works with young people knows the feeling at the end of a day or week when you collapse into a chair and wonder why you bother – but when they happen they are a source of such wonderful, and often timely, encouragement.

When, as a teenager I found myself on something of a quest for vocation, although I probably wouldn't have called it that at the time, rather a search for meaning of my life. How I now understand this search can be explained by Mitch Albom more perfectly than I could ever hope

So many people walk around with a meaningless life. They seem half asleep, even when they're doing things they think are important. This is because they're chasing the wrong things. The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning.

It was a moment of understanding whilst on pilgrimage that gave me the most profound glimpse of understanding I have ever enjoyed and from this stems

all that which gives me purpose and meaning. It was during this moment, reflecting on a week spent with young people, that I first understood that a life in some way lived for the young was to be what would give me purpose and meaning.

As a Salesian I have found that it is usually moments with young people that more than any other aspect of my life that give me this understanding that I so crave. It could be a snatched moment of laughter during a crazy and difficult day, it may be an email thanking me for something years earlier when I am struggling to see the value of my life, it might be a shared reminiscence of a moment long gone that bring joy or it might be as a proud onlooker as a young person I have known and loved does something remarkable. In all of these moments, and so many more examples, there is a variety of common features. That they are invariably when I am feeling down and need a boost, they tend to just happen and cannot possibly be predicted or sought out and they affirm my life in a way that no other can – regularly pointing out something precious that I was unaware of.

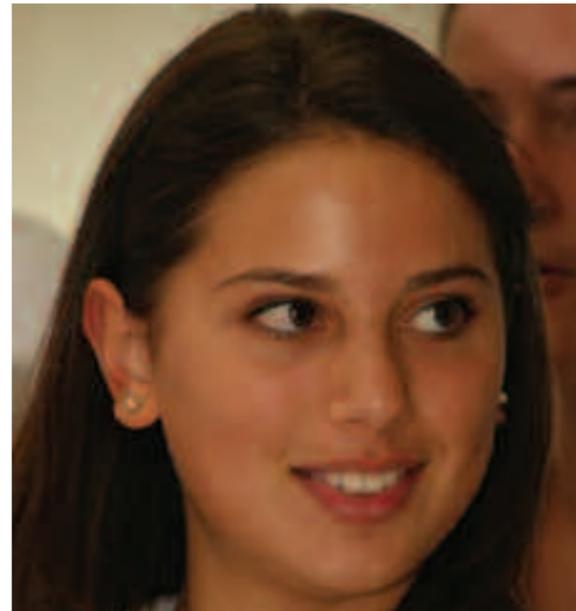
Recently I went online and found a message awaiting me from a young person I had shared an event with some time previously. This message was one which simply recalled the experience and some of the other people involved. She went on to tell me that she had prayed for me as she remembered these things that day in thanksgiving for all the help I had been for her. Before this, I had no idea that I had done anything of any significance. This beautiful message, out of the blue, became a source of great encouragement and joy.

God has called me to Salesian life and how appropriate it is that God uses young people to affirm my vocation and gently encourage me to persevere when things are a struggle.

Brother Matt SDB



MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Volunteering, helping others, making a difference, it all sounds so attractive. However, for me it wasn't enough to help out at church or Guides, I wanted more. With my love for challenges and adventure, the prospect of volunteering abroad sounded exciting. It's something that's always been at the back of my mind, but to actually put it into practice was another thing entirely. And then in 2005 I met like-minded people at university, the difference being that together we actually made it happen. We spent three weeks volunteering in Montero, Bolivia and then travelled around South America. It was somewhere I'd always wanted to go, partly due to studying Spanish, but also the culture really appealed to me.

Contacting BOVA (Bosco Volunteering Action -the vehicle for international volunteering in the British Province) it became possible to volunteer for Bolivia, and eventually after the training that is where I headed.

I confess that I didn't know much about Bolivia, but this allowed me to come open-minded and without any expectations to be fulfilled. I fell in love with the people and their openness, the culture, and the relaxed way of life and couldn't wait to come back. So two years on here I am again. I've quickly discovered that spending three weeks in a country is nothing like spending three months. You get the chance to become so much more involved in the culture here, and feel less like a tourist

and more like part of the community. You can build relationships with people and feel like you're making a real difference. But of course it has its down points, like adjusting to the heat, being continuously dirty, wading through water-logged roads, and avoiding the rubbish on the streets and the free roaming chickens, horses, cows, and pigs!

Along with three Salesian volunteers from the USA, I'm living in a girls' orphanage with more than 100 girls. As the only permanent staff in the orphanage, we play a big role in the girls' lives. We have to be friend, parent, someone to love the girls and someone for them to love too. The girls here have a lot of love to give and always want to hold our hands, hug us and chat to us. I'm mainly with the youngest girls, and with the recent arrival of three babies it can be hectic. The older girls are really good though at helping out and playing with them. We organize games, crafts, go on walks, read books in the library and generally have lots of fun. We've even managed to get them speaking a bit of English!

In the afternoons, I teach English at the Kinder (Nursery School). It's challenging but so rewarding to hear them counting in English or say Hello teacher. I didn't really know what I'd be doing out here but its amazing how it's worked out. As I'm coming to the end of my degree I've started thinking about the future and was considering teaching French and Spanish to younger children. Working in the Kinder has given me the opportunity to try out teaching, where there's no paperwork, no syllabus to follow, the chance to learn from mistakes, and just teaching for the fun of teaching. It's actually made me change my future plans, as I've enjoyed this work so much I'm now considering teaching English to immigrants in the UK. In Bolivia English can be a life-changing skill, opening windows to the US and Europe. Language can be such a barrier, a cause of segregation and racism but by teaching languages I hope to help break down these barriers and to give people in the UK a chance to integrate themselves more into society.

Being in a developing world context can really change your perspectives on life. It's made me so much more aware of the poverty that exists, of how rich we are and of the differences we can make. It's such an enriching experience, and has given me confidence and encouraged me in my Christian journey. It's something I would recommend to anyone and I'm definitely considering doing it again.

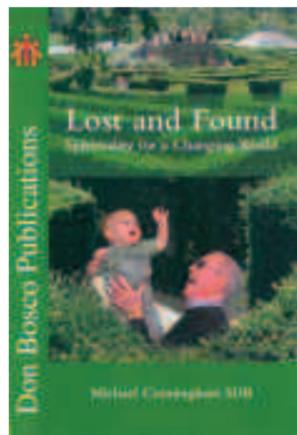
Kathryn Ellis



LOST AND FOUND

Fr Albert van Hecke
SDB, Regional Salesian
Superior for Northern
Europe, with Fr David
O'Malley and Fr
Michael Cunningham

What religion needs to recognise is that spirit can never be contained and restricted. At the heart of the disillusionment with so much contemporary religion is the sense that it seeks to control and restrict God. Our God has become too small. At this stage in history, we are no longer spiritual children whose every thought and experience has to be ratified by higher authority. On Mount Tabor the clothes of Jesus are described as dazzlingly white; the apostles are lost for words. No human words can ever describe the mystery of God. The spirit is wild, portrayed in wind and fire at Pentecost, and it is to that wider sense of mystery and search that many are attracted today. We are rediscovering that religion is not primarily a doctrinal matter or moral matter – important though these are – but a mystical one. Today the mystical and the prophetic have to become one. Far from losing religion, this development will help us find its soul.



M J Cunningham SDB

Michael Cunningham is a Salesian of Don Bosco. He taught Religious Education for over twenty years. He has been engaged in province leadership and was provincial of the British Salesian province for six years. After some years with the Movement for a Better World he has continued to be involved in retreats internationally. He is currently working with Asylum seekers and refugees in Liverpool. He remains a loyal supporter of Bolton Wanderers Football Club. His previous books *Within & Without* and *A Time for Compassion* have helped many people understand their spirituality.

THE BEAR FACTS



Hello Children

It's summer again! I love summertime: do you? There are so many things to do in summer. I go fishing in the river and swimming in the lake: Bears are good swimmers, you know? Sometimes I get sunBEARned ! I play games with my friends like hide and seek: we hide behind trees and rocks, (it's hard for me to hide because I am quite big). It's easier for some of my friends like Rio Rabbit, Sugar Squirrel and Molly Magpie.



I like sport, do you? We play cricket and football and other games. We have a "BEARfoot League", but do you remember how I keep hurting my foot?

In this month's magazine we have our new children's page which we hope you will like. There is an adventure story about me and my friends and there is a maze for you to try and puzzle out.

I would love to hear from YOU! What are you doing this summer? Are you going away for your holidays? We animals stay in the forest all the time; we're happy, but I, sometimes, look at aeroplanes and wonder where they are going.

If you would like to write to me, or send an e-mail, the addresses are:
Thornleigh House
Sharples Park
Bolton
BL1 6PQ
Or boscobear@salesians.org.uk

Congratulations to the winners of last time's competition. The Rosie goes to Church book and DVD have been sent to Geraldine Ainsworth of Stockport, Rianna Charles from Walthamstow, Laura Solari from Ilford, Franklyn Lobo of Upper Norwood, Catherine McNally from Millom, Robert Sydenham of Epsom, Fabrice Gérard from London, Anthony Sydenham of Surrey, Joyal Davis from Oxford, Callum Patrick Crosby of Bolton and Mrs Blackwood's class from St Thomas of Canterbury School, Bolton.

All the winners rightly pointed out that the word organ could not be found in the word-search, and apologies are due to you all for that – sorry

Bosco Bear



BOSCO BEAR IS BUZZING!

One hot, summer's day, I said to my three friends: Rio Rabbit, Sugar Squirrel and Molly Magpie:

I'm hungry and bears love honey. Now that it's summer, there are bees everywhere and bees make honey - let's go and find some.

Mmm. Good idea, said Rio.

I don't want to get stung, said Sugar.

Come on, I said, we'll be alright.

The sun was shining brightly. There were no clouds in the sky: it was a beautiful day. We walked towards the river where there were some brightly coloured flowers: there were lots of bees buzzing around. I could see that the bees had made a honeycomb full of delicious honey, but how could we get near it without BEEing stung. We tip-toed towards the honey. The bees were all around us:

I don't like this, said Sugar. Buzz off.



One bee was buzzing next to my ear, another one was flying next to my nose, one was on my foot. *Oh no; not my foot again,* I thought. And then.....

Molly had a brainwave!

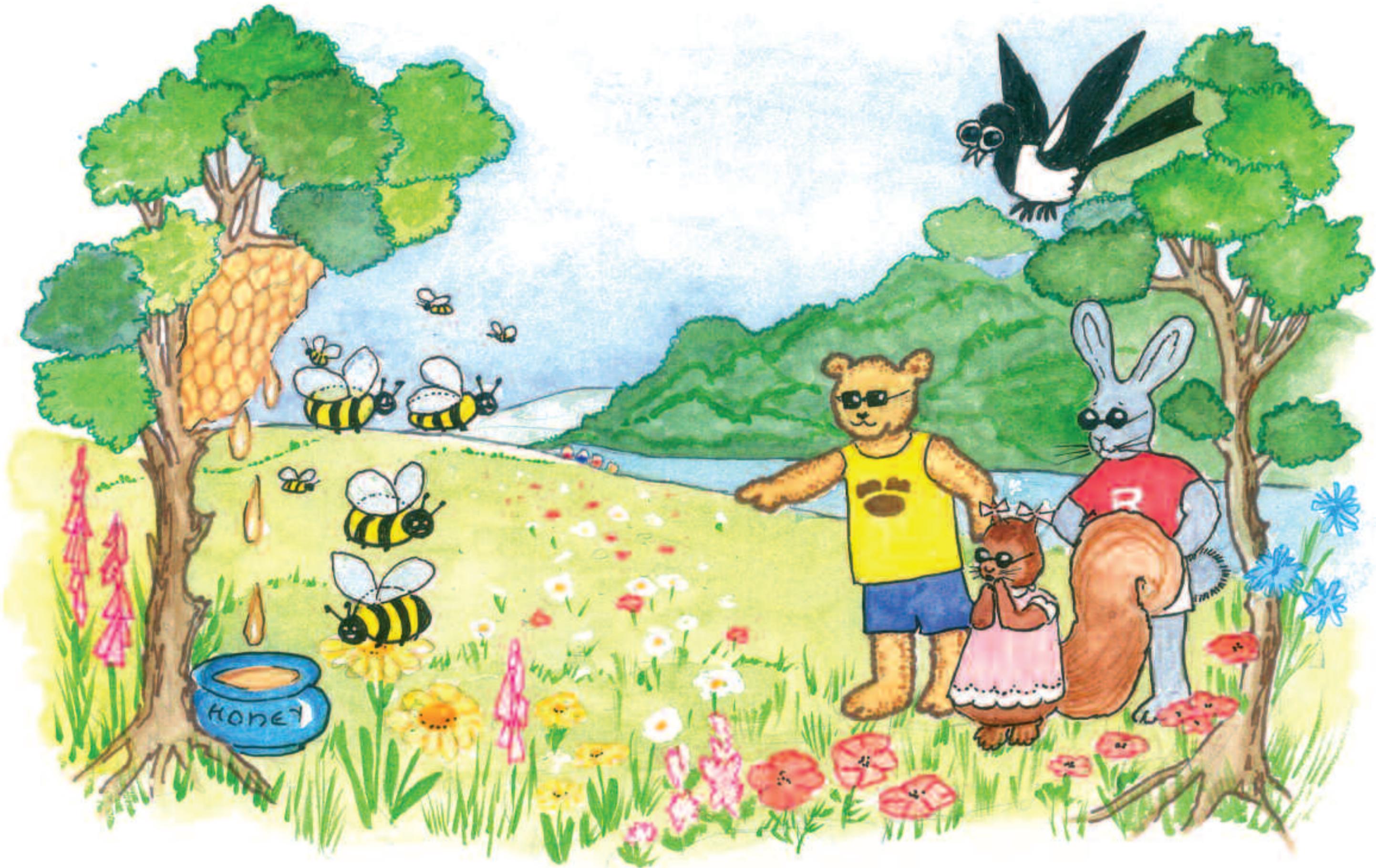
Look over there, she said.



Not far away some children were finishing a picnic. They had eaten jam sandwiches and cream cakes. Molly flew over and picked up all the bits that were left. The bees were watching! Molly put the sandwiches and the cake in one big pile and the bees zoomed across and tucked in!

Quick, I said. *Get the honey!*

Later, back in my cave, we were happy and sticky friends. It had been a sunny, yummy, honey day.



I LOVE RAIN

I'm sure that you know that there are millions of people in the world, who don't have enough food to eat and enough water to drink. In some countries it doesn't seem to rain much at all and you have to have water to drink; and you have to have water to grow a lot of food.

In England we often complain when it rains.

Right now, in Australia there is a drought (which means it hasn't rained for ages). A lot of people are really worried.

Do you know that spaceships are travelling to other planets, like Mars, looking for water so that one day people will be able to live somewhere else as well as on Earth.



What did you have for breakfast today? I usually have a cup of coffee (and the coffee comes from Brazil) and some marmalade on toast (and marmalade comes from oranges grown in Spain).

The farmers who grow the coffee and the oranges are poor people who don't get much money for their work. We should think of those poor people and pray that they are happy. We should thank God for the great gift of rain that he sends us and we should be glad that we aren't thirsty or hungry or poor.

AMAZING!

Can you find the path for Bosco Bear and his friends to follow, in order to reach the honey?



LOURDES

For over fifty years now, HCPT has been organising pilgrimages to Lourdes at Easter for children with a variety of special needs. Some have physical disabilities; others have learning disabilities or live in difficult home situations. As priest chaplain in one of the family groups, I look forward each year to sharing the experience with both the children and the helpers, young and not so young.



Many of the helpers are students at sixth form, or in further or higher education. Very often, they volunteer because they have heard about HCPT from an enthusiastic friend, but they soon realise the level of commitment expected of them. They have to raise a significant amount of cash for their own fare and accommodation. They join in fund-raising for the children. They have to get Criminal Record Bureau clearance. They attend group meetings and training sessions. They help draw up risk assessments. They visit the families of the children for many weeks so that they can get to know them and help to give them the best possible care.

All these preparations reach their climax in the week in Lourdes. It always amazes me how quickly the bond between the children and their helpers develops. Don Bosco knew the value of having young people helping other young people, that special chemistry which comes from closeness of years and similarity of experience. Who better than a self-conscious young person to persuade another self-conscious younger person to wear the funny hat and other regalia so essential to keep the group together in crowds of tens of thousands? Who better than another young person to communicate by example, as much as by words, that celebrations of faith in the Mass and other religious activities are real celebrations that can lift their spirits.

And the young helpers are so generous and loving with their care for the children. Although support is always at hand from older and more experienced helpers, they are the ones who deal with all the ups and downs of daily life, from getting-up time to bed time, and sometimes middle of the night time, including the emotional and behavioural glitches which sometimes happen.

It is not all in one direction. The children respond with trust and friendship. The young helpers soon learn how much the children have to teach them. In our group, we had one boy with particularly severe physical and learning disabilities. He could not communicate by speech. He needed help with all his basic needs. It was so inspiring to see the affection shown towards him by the other children. One went to the same special school and spoke with obvious delight about how he attended her classes. Another would just stand beside his wheelchair and stroke his hand.

The impression made on the young helpers is proved by the way so many come back again and again. In our group, there were some who had made their first pilgrimage as sixth formers, but continued on into their university years.

At the end of the week there is usually a thank you present and card for the chaplain. I am always aware of the debt of gratitude I owe to these wonderful children and helpers, young and not so young. They convince me that our faith is alive and well and does have something for the future as well as for the past. They recharge my spiritual batteries and give me strength for the rest of my year.



GOD DOESN'T CARE WHAT YOU WEAR

Versace, Chanel, Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci, Louis Vuitton. Are these really the labels that define us? Many people in today's society place importance on buying products with designer labels, but I say we are defined by the inner labels that make up our personality, labels that don't cost any money and do not show on the surface. These are the labels – Courage, Honour, Loyalty, Kindness, Sincerity, Determination. These are the qualities we should strive to acquire, not material possessions. I feel we should reject the ideals of consumerism in order to pursue our own individuality.

What is consumerism? I would define it as buying products and clothes in order to bring happiness. However, do we really need to wear designer labels to make us happy? Surely there are more important things in life, such as those close to us, our friends and family who surround us with happiness every day, regardless of the image we portray. Don't get me wrong, I understand that in some way we are all involved with consumer culture. After all, we all need to purchase goods and should be allowed to buy luxuries with the money we have earned, but what need is there to buy expensive clothes and products just because they have a label? It could be argued that certain labels show that these products will be of a high quality. What I am concerned about is the other reasons people may have for buying designer products.

Many buy brand names as a way of showing they are superior to others. This has a negative effect on our society as it often leads to feelings of alienation, rejection and humiliation for those who cannot afford these high-priced products. People become more concerned with their outward appearance; consequently, they become shallow and judge people by their looks and the clothes they wear or the car they drive. If we choose friends based on how they dress and in the case of girls, the make-up they wear and the way they style their hair, what foundation is that for a friendship? I mean, would we ever pick up a Caramac bar if we judged it on the plain, unattractive packaging? Yet, underneath the wrapper is a sweet and tasty chocolate bar. This same principle can apply to people. There are far more important things in life, and to judge someone on the products they own and their surface detail is superficial. We need to look under the surface and the appearances that are quite literally skin-deep, and focus on the inner qualities which should help us relate to people.

So why do we feel it is necessary to gain material possessions and display designer labels in order to feel better about ourselves? I feel I could answer this question with two simple phrases: Peer Pressure and Media Conditioning and the two are linked with each other. Peer Pressure is the idea that we feel compelled to act a certain way in order to fit in with those around us, and in this case we feel we need to follow fashion trends and display the name of a designer. Do we have to imitate the way celebrities dress just because glossy magazines deem them as style icons? Are we sheep? Do we really have a mind of our own? If we blindly follow trends and all try to wear similar clothes we are indeed sheep, sheep in woolly Moschino coats.

Are we really to blame for getting swept along in the tidal wave of consumerism? To a certain extent - No. This brings me to my next point - Media Conditioning. We are constantly bombarded with images in magazines and television of people displaying these products. Although consumerism and fashion seems to be directed largely at the female audience, it is not solely aimed at women. Just look at the many men who model themselves on the style of celebrities such as David Beckham, Jude Law, Brad Pitt and Robbie Williams, to name a few. There is nothing wrong with wanting to look good, but do we really have to imitate famous people in order to do this? Take, for example, the advertising campaign for Omega watches. Due to the launch of the Bond movie, Casino Royale, they have decided to have James Bond as the new figure-head for their campaign. This will appeal to the male audience, as many men would want to imitate the characteristics of this fictional spy. Will buying an Omega watch really give men the lifestyle associated with James Bond? I think not.

An auction of vintage Omega watches as well as one worn by Daniel Craig in the James Bond movie Casino Royale fetched a staggering 2.7 million pounds.

Media Conditioning can have a bad effect on its intended market because it can often create negative feelings in the potential buyer, which then means they feel compelled to buy their products in order to make themselves feel good. The greatest example of this is when women are continually shown images of ridiculously skinny models, which puts them under pressure to lose weight, so they can resemble their more androgynous body shapes, instead of feeling good about their own figures. The advertising campaigns and mainstream media put people under pressure to buy their products, all for the sake of making the designers rich. In this way, it is no wonder we feel the need to wear labels and buy products in order to relate to others, which shows the link between Media Conditioning and Peer Pressure. However, not all media has portrayed consumerism in a good light. Some films such as Fight Club and The Devil Wears Prada have highlighted this issue and have shown the negative aspects associated with consumerism. The Devil Wears Prada follows the career of a young female journalist who is caught up in consumerism as she gets a job in the fashion industry. However, by the end of the film, she comes to realise that the people in her life that are more important to her, and she should not betray her own identity. Fight Club addresses the phenomenon that men are now becoming consumers at the expense of their more basic hunter-gatherer instincts. The protagonist of the movie leads a terrorist movement in which men join together in an attempt to crush consumerism. However, the extreme measures they resort to in order to achieve this are radical and violent, and in practice can only make society worse. Aggressive acts of terrorism are certainly not the answer! However, this does not mean that we all have to accept the ideals of consumerism so willingly.

I have come to the conclusion that consumerism is not a natural human instinct, but rather an artificial creation of the media. So please, do not think you need to wear brand names to feel better about yourself. Instead, focus on the things that truly make you happy in life and pursue your own individuality. Above all, don't forget the most important label of all: I am what I am.

Charlotte Wallwork

RACHEL CARES

I want to introduce you to a wonderful young person I know, let's call her Rachel. She is a heroine, hidden in a domestic life few adults could survive. Rachel doesn't live in a war-torn country, nor is she a victim of floods or famine. Her struggle happens in a West Midlands town in Great Britain in 2007, it happens every day and she meets it alone. This is her story:

My name is Rachel, I am 13 years old and I look after my Mum. She has been bad for a while, she sometimes wants to kill herself and it frightens me. One day when I was getting the tea ready and she was feeling good she asked if she could help with the vegetables. I let her get a knife out of the drawer and before I noticed she had cut her arms with big zig zag gashes. I had to call the ambulance. We were lucky that evening because she missed the arteries. Now I hide the knives and have to tell my Dad where they are when he comes in from work.

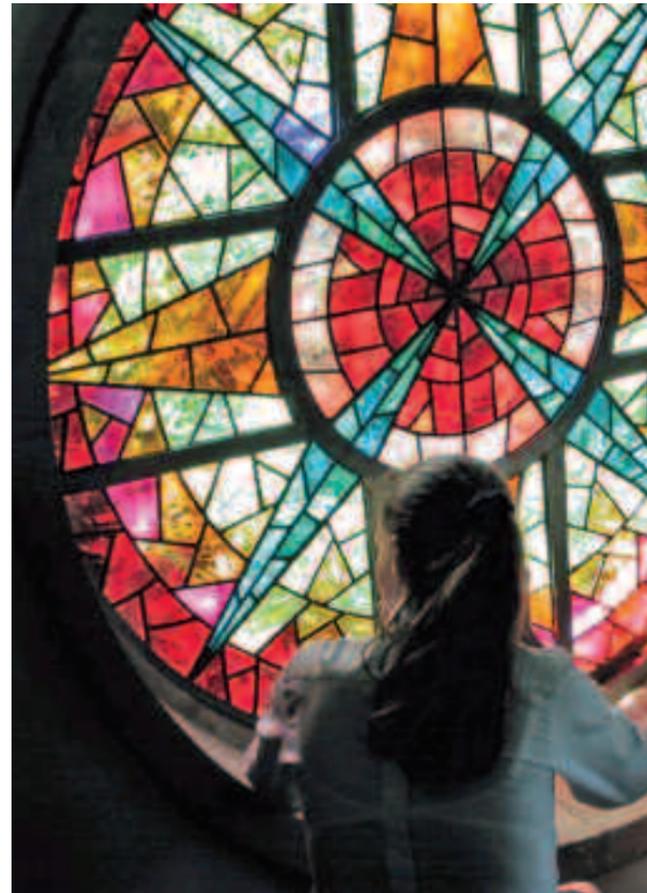
I also have to hide the keys so that Mum can't lock herself in the house. Once I had to bang on the doors and windows for hours before she let me and my little sister in. Mum has forgotten how to change nappies for my sister so I do all that. Last month my sister had grown out of all her clothes so I had to go and buy some more. I handle the money as best I can but that time I got it wrong and spent too much on some nice clothes and we didn't have enough for food or for the milkman. My Dad says I worry too much but he's never there. When he comes in from work Mum is always sleeping.

I find it hard to trust my Dad. He works a lot but he doesn't seem to realise how much Mum needs him. Last week Mum went out to the cinema while I looked after my sister. I walked down with her, with my sister in the pram and left her there. Dad was going to pick her up. He never did. I waited until about ten thirty and then put my sister in the pram and went down to the cinema. She was wandering around lost and confused. I knew she would be. I was so angry!

I talked to my Dad the next day and he said he didn't think it was that important. He said he'd had a few drinks and couldn't drive and then he said he knew I could cope. It's like he sat there in the pub and thought to himself, "Should I choose my daughter or more booze?" The booze won. After that, I realised that I was on my own. I went off for a few nights to stay with my best friend Jess. She calmed me down and I slept so well that I was able to go back home, knowing I could get away from things when I needed.

The first thing I did was take my Mum to the doctors. I went in with her and the doctor asked me what I was doing there. I had to tell him all about Mum and how mixed up she was and her attempted suicides. When he just gave her some more tablets I lost my temper and told him she needed help not drugs. He told me I wasn't helping so I told him that without me my mother would be dead! He asked me to leave the room. Later I wrote to his boss and explained things in a letter more calmly. That doctor has now been moved and Mum was put on a list for therapy.

When the letter came from the doctor there was nine-month waiting list for the therapy and I knew she wouldn't survive for nine months. So I rang the centre and arranged for her to go as a private patient. I had some money in an account for my education from my Gran's will and I got the money from that. Then she was away in the centre for a whole month and I looked after my sister alone. I went to see her almost every day. Sometimes she was frightened because of the people in there but gradually she calmed down and began to cry a lot, which was good, I think.



When she came home, she was definitely different but still low in confidence. It took her a long time to be able to go out for walks and smile again but it is happening. We changed her bedroom at home and removed all the blue colour which she said drove her crazy. Last month she got a job and started working part time. So things are looking up. Dad is around less and less, when he's not working he's playing snooker. We had a holiday last month, all of us together. We always play perfect families on holiday, everyone tries to be nice, but it's all a lie and it never lasts.

When I grow up, I want to live on my own and maybe look after my sister because I am ten years older than she is. I'd like to work in the media industry, doing advertising or photography or something. I have learnt a lot from caring for my Mum. I have learnt that shouting at people doesn't work. I know that I have to calm down and control my feelings, breathe slowly, take a walk and things like that. The most important thing is that whoever you care for, let them know that you love them every day, let them know that you'll be there for them.

Young people in my situation need to have good friends, people who will just listen and listen and listen with kindness. They may not be able to understand but they need to be gentle and patient. People like me also need to find another adult to talk to either a gran or a teacher who

can help them understand and care for them. Young people like me need friends like Jess who can give them nights away so that they can sleep and relax in a normal home.

Facts and Figures

- The 2001 Census estimated that there are 175,000 young carers aged under 18 in the UK, but this may be an underestimation.
- Around three million children in the UK have a family member with a disability
- Around a quarter of a million young people in the UK live with a parent who is misusing a Class A drug.
- 920,000 young people in the UK are children of alcoholic parents.
- The average age of young carers is 12, but they can be as young as five years old.
- 86% are of compulsory school age

JAMES PILLING SDB 1925 - 2007 and JAMES GIBBONS SDB

1930 - 2007

It is unusual for us to bid our final farewells to two of our brothers on the same day. It presents us with a quandary. How best, as we pray, to recall some of the significant qualities of each of the two Jims. Some things they shared, but each contributed his own self, and their selves were very different. Our God loves variety.

They were both boys at Shrigley, our junior seminary, Jim Pilling from Lancashire and Jim Gibbons from Durham. Jim Pilling was ordained in 1952; Jim Gibbons in 1960. Jim, for the first thirteen years of his priesthood, was provincial secretary. He then took the imaginative step of qualifying as a psychiatric social worker, at the London School of Economics. After qualifying, Jim came to Blaisdon Hall in Gloucestershire – to the special school we had there. Blaisdon was his home for 27 years, until the school closed in 1994. These were Jim's halcyon years for which he will always be remembered with great affection by countless Blaisdon past pupils and staff. He carved out a role for himself which had not existed in the school before he came. He introduced a new level of care for the children and a new level of support for the staff, both teaching and care staff. He was a great support to parents and to staff, of whom I was occasionally one.

Wednesday was a day we didn't see Jim, rather we saw a different Jim. He dressed up, he was a natty dresser, and would go to the Child Guidance Clinic in Gloucester, where he worked one day each week to keep a balance and receive the support he needed.

When Blaisdon closed in 1994, he developed fresh interests: a new career. He joined the Battersea community He became a great lover of the Holy Land and spent six months in Jerusalem. He led at least four groups of pilgrims and studied Hebrew at Heythrop College. He gathered friends into the Salesian Cooperators, until diabetes and strokes and restricted vision gradually took their toll. He joined the Farnborough community in 2004.

As I was preparing these words, I came across a card in his prayer book. On it there was this saying of John Henry Newman: The first duty of charity is to try to enter the mind and feelings of others. This was Jim Pilling. This was also James Gibbons and serves as a natural bridge-over between the two much-loved men.

James Gibbons was a dynamo of activity and energy. His path, after ordination in 1960, lay in schools and schooling. For seven years, he taught at Shrigley, after that he moved to Bolton. He taught Geography in which he

was qualified and proficient, also Religious Studies. He loved and followed sport until his last stay in hospital. In 1970, Jim Gibbons came to Chertsey. It was his home and place of work for the next 22 years. His halcyon years were as Head of the Intake Year, when the boys transferred to the Salesian School from our feeder Middle Schools, at the age of 13. It was not an easy age to deal with. Jim, of course, was fond of football. Fond would be an understatement. He took football trips to Canada in many a



summer holiday. Parents appreciated his care and interest. In the early 80s the school became completely co-educational. I have spoken to several women, past-pupils, now in their late 30s who were very appreciative and spoke of Jim with great warmth. After Chertsey, he returned to become an assistant chaplain to the junior end of our growing school in Bolton – but illness struck and he had two strokes which sapped his energy, and sadly his confidence.

The two Jims met up at Farnborough. They were different in their characters and their approach, but they both responded to God's call. The charism of Don Bosco shaped both their lives. For both, their active years preceded long periods of ill health. We could easily forget what they did and what they stood for. We owe it to them and to ourselves not to forget, nor to pass by too quickly.

I end with that quotation from Cardinal Newman again. The first duty of charity is to try and enter into the mind and feelings of others.

This could well be an epitaph for both our Jims, and perhaps, for us – a goal.

May they rest in peace.

Fr John Gilheney SDB

SISTER BEORCHIA DOLORA FMA 1911 - 2007

Dolores, as she was always known, was born at Majina, Udine, Italy and professed, as a Salesian Sister, at Casanova on 6th August 1932. In 1933 she was sent to England.

For the next 26 years Sister Dolores worked in the linen rooms and laundries of the Salesian houses at Battersea, Cowley, Farnborough and Chertsey with a period of nine years in the house at Chertsey during the war when, as an alien, her movements were restricted. She also spent the years 1952-55 in the linen room of the same house where there was a boarding school. One of the boarders from that time still visited Sister Dolores until recently.

From 1961 onwards Sister Dolores worked in the laundry in Sandrock Hall, Hastings, a home for girls in need of support. There she helped with the assistance of the girls, several of whom kept in contact with her. Then she worked in our houses in Liverpool, Cowley Streatham and Chertsey, usually in the linen room, but sometimes helping in the kitchen. At the age of 80 having suffered great pain for some time, she had a hip replacement and made a wonderful recovery.

During the years in Hastings and Chertsey, she spent time in the garden, growing vegetables and flowers for the community, bringing in the flowering plants during the winter to decorate the windowsills in the corridor outside the chapel. In 1999 she went back to Cowley to retire, but was always to be seen helping with the washing and ironing and cleaning until she became too unwell.

Just after Christmas, she had what appeared to be a stroke and lost the power of speech. She was admitted to hospital, where everything possible was done for her, but she became steadily weaker until, with her sisters and the hospital chaplain by her bedside, she was united to her Lord.

As a younger sister, Sister Dolores had rather a stern and serious appearance, which hid a heart of gold, but she mellowed as she grew older and smiled more often. She was much loved by all who looked after her.

Sister Elizabeth Purcell
Provincial



THIS SEASON'S BOOKS

Fr Albert van Hecke SDB, Regional Salesian Superior for Northern Europe, with Fr David O'Malley and Fr Michael Cunningham



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